

Never Trust the Weather!

The Spring Soar for Fun Aerotow in Cumberland, Maryland never fails to please.

[Stéphane RUELLE](#)



Overview of the pilot pit, with the main building in the background. SH Minimoa and Baudis Antares on the foreground.

After a winter frantically spent building, the spring fever started to build in me for our first aerotow of the 2021 season, the 12th edition of *Spring Soar for Fun Aerotow* near Cumberland, Maryland. This event is usually taking place end of March, close to the first day of spring. And in the past 12 years we have known all kind of weather, from snow cold to T-shirt hot, it has been a quite interesting exercise to predict what next year will be! the only thing I can say is I always looking for the event — the season starter — as it is always good to do some aero talking if flying is not available.

As always, a week before you look the forecast and try to judge what

weather will be. This is where the roller coaster of emotion is going on as every day in that end of winter, beginning of spring the weather changes radically, going this year to a total wash down with snow mix to beautiful sunshine. At some point you need to commit and walk away from forecast, last that I saw was nice on Wednesday, rain on Thursday, maybe snow mix on Friday and sunny on Saturday to Monday. I committed to leave Michigan very early on Wednesday to be able to grab a piece of Wednesday afternoon weather.



Photo 1: Early departure with the trailer to arrive in time for the afternoon.

After the drive to Maryland (flying site is in actually in West Virginia at the border with Maryland), the weather gods kept their promises, and allowed for some flying Wednesday afternoon, a bit overcast with lower ceiling but very flyable weather with some light thermals. We have been able to fly until dark and stored the plane in the hangars that Jim D the owner of the place installed couple years back.



Photo 2: Diner on the deck around a pit fire, how better end a day of flying.

Once this done most the people stayed for a diner at the field grilling and picnicking until pitch dark to watch the International Space Station moving in the sky over us. This is one of the positive effects of 2020, people try avoiding hotels and restaurants, going to a more authentic experience very similar to the spirit you find in Europe for that type of event. I hope it will last as the best memories are after the flying of the day is over, storytelling about

the day or previous experiences.



Photo 3: Pilots (left-to-right) Len, Kevin, Bert, Steve K and Steve P.

Thursday the weathermen played against us with low ceiling and drizzle that allowed some of us to proceed with the necessary repairs on retract or other mechanical devices or bring back some improvements to the radio programming. The aerotowing community is always here to help putting back everyone in flying condition when so usual snags are showing up, and as a fact Len's trailer is always a key of success on the east coast, as he has always something that could help you getting back in the air!



Photo 4: One of the two hangar, that hosted the repairs and fixes of Thursday.

Friday that originally was calling for snow mix, showed up with a totally different face, when I woke up a beautiful blue sky was there without any clouds, clouds that did not showed up during the rest of the weekend. Temperature progressively rises to 70F (20C) making up of some very pleasant spring days spent on the top of the mountain! Thermals have been present every day, very weak but flyable until noon, giving a very nice training to improve your circling and thermal hunting skills. About lunchtime to 2:30 some very pleasant condition took place with some more robust thermals (and some very noticeable sink!, I clocked +5m/s and -7m/s on my vario that day!) that allowed some of the participant to train their skill on GPS triangle racing (30 minutes work time on a 2.4km course, forcing you to travel on every sides of the flying site, I will be back on a future article on how it appeal to me).



Photo 5: Kevin K getting ready to take of with his 6m KV model Shark for an initiation to a 30mn session of GPS triangle, he will come back from this hooked.



Photo 6: Peter and Caroline G assembling the Peter Goldsmith Design L-19, one of the tug on duties during this week end. Foreground, Slingsby Swallow Caroline's personal model.

This weekend has been for me like other the occasion of maidenizing the winter built aircraft, in my case a 6m ASG 29 kit. The conditions where perfect for maidens, light lift light wind, very adequate to get a good feeling on how is answering the plane. As all my sailplanes now (most of) I have taken the habit to install and electric motor in the nose, it appeals to me as it is an insurance (some airframe can be pricy or in regard the time invested to build the airframe) on the sailplane to be able to bail out of a bad situation, like a crowded landing, of flying lower than the landing area on a slope without finding lift. The other big advantage been able to fly much more often by yourself, either as the sailplane can ROG (rise off ground) by itself or like this one, use a bungee to get necessary prop clearance to be able to start the motor. On this particular sailplane as the nose was quite round with

difficulties to use a matching nose cone, I decide to use the Torcman FES system, that is on my view a very good solution also for safety as you connect the prop just before taking of, no risk to hit a switch and get sliced!



Photo 7: First flight for my winter project, a 6m ASG29. Powered with Rimfire 1.2 (Kv 450), 6S 5000mA and RFM 16x10 mounted with a Torcman FES system

Baudis Model 5m Diana 2 with Torcman FES-Ex



Video 8: Video of my Diana 2 taken the day after the even enjoying the emptiness of the place

this edition has been quite a success, and I can only encourage people to come and join us, the event is organized three times a year for each of the flyable seasons. All events are held at the [Highpoint Aviation Airfield](#):

Figure 9: Where you will find the Highpoint Aviation Airfield. (image: Google Maps)

The next event on the calendar will be the 9th annual *Summer Soar for Fun Aerotow* will be held on July 15th through 18th, 2021 ([registration](#)). After that, the 55th edition of *Fall Soar for Fun Aerotow* will be held November 4th through 7th, 2021 ([registration](#)).

See you there and don't forget **not** to look to the forecast!

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